

# Department of Human Services

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\*Important story at this spot

## Articles in Today's Clips Monday, September 10, 2007

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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Five Wayne County infants suffocated this week while sleeping with an adult in the second string of deaths in six weeks, adding to the state's worst child welfare problem -- babies dying before their first birthday.

The deaths magnify the pervasive, but preventable, problem of parents putting their babies to sleep in unsafe situations, health officials say. According to a Detroit News analysis of infant autopsies, dangerous sleep environments were cited in 58 percent of those deaths in Metro Detroit since 1994. Nearly 40 percent of the babies died after sharing a bed with an adult -- the leading cause of death for healthy infants. Other causes include excess crib bedding and infants being put to sleep face-down.

"We are mystified," Wayne County Medical Examiner Carl J. Schmidt said about the two recent spikes in baby deaths. "The biggest tragedy of all of these is when you look back at how the infants died, they were preventable deaths."

State and local health officials have increased their educational outreach about safe sleep practices since July, when five other infants died over a two-day period, including three who suffocated while sleeping with adults. It comes as six infants in Detroit, Wayne and Lincoln Park died between the Labor Day weekend and Wednesday, with five of them appearing to have died while sleeping with their parents.

"It takes just one time for something tragic to happen," said Lynn Kleiman, program manager for special maternal child health projects at the Detroit Department of Health and Wellness. "Parents and whoever takes care of their babies need to practice safe sleep not once, but every time they put their babies down to sleep."

'It could happen to anybody'

Rebecca Shaw knows it can only take one time to turn an innocent situation into tragedy. Long before she gave birth to her son in May, Shaw knew how to safely put her son to sleep. But the night she and her husband brought their son home from the hospital, painkillers and exhaustion led her to fall asleep with their baby in bed. When she woke up, she discovered he had rolled underneath his father and stopped breathing.

William Shaw IV was only 4 days old.

"It taught us how short life can be," said Shaw of Waterford. "I never thought something like this could happen to me but it could happen to anybody."

The recent spate of infant deaths, while alarming, is not an anomaly.

Since 2004, 152 otherwise healthy infants have died in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties, according to a Detroit News analysis. Of those, 39 percent suffocated while sharing a bed with an adult. Another 19 percent died because they were put to sleep face-down, with excess bedding or became wedged between a mattress and a wall.

Autopsy reports rarely mention whether adult obesity or use of drugs or alcohol were factors in the babies' deaths, but the 2004 Michigan Child Death Review showed drugs or alcohol played a role in 11 of 45 cases examined that year while obesity factored into six cases.

Infant deaths in Michigan due to unsafe sleep practices have risen 60 percent since 1990 because of a change in reporting methods, experts say. Before then, deaths were often attributed to sudden infant death syndrome, a term that provided little explanation about why an infant died. Officials now do more scene investigations, leading to fewer deaths categorized as SIDS and more attributed to unsafe sleep practices.

Better categorization has given health officials a blueprint for preventing infant mortality in Michigan, which ranks 34th worst in the nation. If more preventable deaths were curtailed, infant mortality could be improved, said Teri Covington, director of the National Center for Child Death Review Policy and Practice.

"When the infant mortality rate drops, the community is healthier," Covington said. "It's a moral imperative that we as a society come together to prevent infants from dying, our most vulnerable."

This week the state took a step in that direction, unveiling a Web site that offers safe sleep tips.

State warns parents

Most parents have embraced the message of putting babies to sleep on their backs since the national "Back to Sleep" campaign was launched in 1994. Some parents, however, still sleep with their infants because of cultural beliefs or family practices, so the state's safe sleep campaigns

<http://www.printthis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?action=cpt&title=For+babies%2C+parents%27+bed+deadly...> 9/10/2007

## For babies, parents' bed deadly

include information on the dangers of co-sleeping, soft bedding and unnecessary items in cribs.

Next week, the U.S. Office of Minority Health will launch a national campaign in Detroit to reduce infant mortality locally, especially among African-Americans. The Detroit health department will also open the Pathways Center, which will be a central place for maternal and child resources, including safe sleep materials.

The Wayne County health department is continuing its Operation Safe Sleep campaign, which was launched in July after the first spate of infant deaths. The program offers portable cribs to parents who participate in a one-hour class on safe sleep practices. In the six weeks it has been operational, the program has served 200 residents and offered help to others through its hot line, (313) 732-7951.

"Babies are dying needlessly," said Catharine Oliver, director of personal health services for the department. "They don't have to die. All we have to do is keep our babies safe."

Meanwhile, a pilot program run by Tomorrow's Child/Michigan SIDS Alliance has been working for years to change protocols at local hospitals to get the message to new mothers before they leave the hospital with their newborns. Nurses at Providence Hospital in Southfield, the Detroit Medical Center hospitals and Henry Ford Hospital have been trained to teach all new mothers how to put their children to sleep safely.

Now that there is a template for training nurses, the plan is to take the project statewide, said Sandra Frank, executive director of Tomorrow's Child.

"It's going to take awhile to convince people to change," Frank said. "But we have to because babies are dying."

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## Charges downgraded in baby's death

**FLINT TOWNSHIP**

**THE FLINT TOWNSHIP NEWS**

Sunday, September 09, 2007

**Community Staff Writer**

FLINT TWP. - More than six months after Andrea M. Kline was accused of killing her newborn son in a New York state hotel, a grand jury has indicted the township woman on charges including criminally negligent homicide.

Kline, 21, is a 2004 Powers High School graduate who has been free on bond, waiting for the grand jury to hear her case. Now she must return to face three charges - including two felonies - in Jefferson County, N.Y.

Her attorney said the charges represent a victory for his client because they are far less serious than those with which Kline initially was charged.

Police claimed Kline killed her newborn - fracturing the infant's skull - after giving birth in a hotel where she was visiting her boyfriend, the baby's father.

She was charged with dumping the baby's body in a wastebasket at a hotel.

Kline attorney James McGraw said the death was an accident and that the blunt force trauma that caused it came as the young woman tried to deliver the baby herself while in a state of shock.

"She never intended the child's death," and the indictment reflects that, McGraw said. "It's the lowest felony on the books. We'll try that and try to convince the jury."

Cindy Intschert, district attorney for Jefferson County, N.Y., confirmed that the grand jury on Aug. 29 indicted Kline on charges of criminally negligent homicide, tampering with physical evidence and endangering the welfare of a child.

The first two charges are felonies, said Intschert, who would not comment further.

Each felony is punishable by up to 4 years in prison. The misdemeanor charge carries a penalty of up to an additional year.

McGraw said he had not spoken to his client since the grand jury returned the charges.

Kline was a junior at Western Michigan University at the time of her arrest but was not enrolled in school there as of May. She still must be arraigned on the charges against her.

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## Arraignment postponed for former counselor

**FLINT**

**THE GRAND BLANC NEWS**

Sunday, September 09, 2007

**Community Staff Writer**

GRAND BLANC - A judge in Keweenaw County Circuit Court has postponed the arraignment of former Grand Blanc West Middle School counselor Arthur McGuff until a motion to dismiss one charge is considered.

McGuff, 47, was arrested June 29 in Copper Harbor in the Upper Peninsula after leading police on a 40-mile chase.

Police said his wife had gotten out of the van in Hancock and called them to report he was driving under the influence of cocaine. Police said she told them there were six children in the van, ages 3 to 14.

McGuff's attorney, Nicholas Daavettila of Houghton, asked the judge to dismiss a charge of second-degree child abuse, the court clerk said.

McGuff was set to be arraigned last week on a misdemeanor charge of operating while intoxicated and three felony charges: fleeing police, possession of cocaine and child abuse.

A new date for the arraignment has not been set yet, the clerk said.

- Staff report

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Published September 9, 2007

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## Angel House receives six-figure Dart grant

By CHRISTIE BLECK  
Lansing Community Newspapers

MASON — The Dart Foundation has given the children's shelter Angel House a \$100,000 grant to continue its work in giving troubled youngsters a temporary domestic home.

The money will be given over the next four years.

Jim Paparella, executive director of Child & Family Services, Capital Area, said Angel House is a "critically needed and community-supported asset" that opened in June 2006 after five years of planning and fundraising.

Agencies such as the Ingham County Sheriff's Office, Children's Protective Services and other law-enforcement and child-welfare agencies agreed there was a need for Angel House.

Paparella said, "There was a consensus that our community suffered from two significant gaps in our child protection system."

The first gap, he said, was that there was no place to immediately take children removed from their home for abuse and neglect.

"Too often children would wait long hours in a lobby, police car or other unsuitable places until a relative or foster home could be located," he said.

Also, there was no single point and child-friendly place to interview and assess children suspected of being sexually abused. Too often, Paparella said, children were interviewed by different people in different ways over several days.

"This was not only traumatic to the child," he said, "the lack of coordination among the agencies involved was problematic and at times weakened the prosecutorial case against the perpetrator."

When the public campaign to build Angel House began, Dart donated the land on Kerns Road, plus \$100,000 for construction costs.

Angel House volunteer Shirley Grieve of Mason was thrilled with Dart's recent contribution.

"It was just awesome," Grieve said.

Angel House Executive Director Jerre Cory was on vacation as of press time and could not be reached for comment.

In a prepared statement, Dart Foundation Vice President Jim Lammers said: "We send our hopes that Angel House will continue its important work to alleviate the suffering of abused and neglected children in our area."

Claudia Deschaine, Dart Foundation grants manager, said Dart has been involved with Angel House since the beginning, and many employees had donated time to get the shelter under way.

"We kind of see them as being our neighbor," Deschaine said.

She said Dart Foundation treasurer Bill Myers, who died this past February, was one particular strong proponent of Angel House.

"He just cared about the mission," Deschaine said.

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## Child safety expo to be held Tuesday

CADILLAC — The Cadillac Fire Department, in partnership with the Wexford/Missaukee Safe Kids and the United Way of Wexford County, will be hosting its 11th annual Child Safety Expo Tuesday.

The expo begins at 4 p.m. and includes information to assist parents in keeping their children safe through various events.

The expo will include a fire safety education trailer, police K-9 Team, bike helmet give-away, poison safety information, child fingerprinting, methamphetamine awareness information and a car seat safety check-up. There also will be free hotdogs and free safety item give-a-ways.

Reservations are needed for the car seat checkup and can be done by calling the United Way at 775-3753.

All are invited to share in an afternoon of fun while learning about the important topic of child safety.





## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### Web site helps foster kids leaving system

Monday, September 10, 2007

By Mel Haga

You have just celebrated your 18th birthday. Congratulations -- you're now an adult.

Oh, and by the way, you need to leave the home you've been living in and find another. You need to find a job and support yourself. You need to figure out how you're going to get the education you need for the job you want and you need to do it without the help of a parent or guardian.

What if you have health or legal problems? Suppose you have a child of your own? What a challenge!

This is the situation in which many foster care kids find themselves. There are some resources, but how do they find them?

The current foster care law stipulates that youth are no longer eligible for foster care when they reach the age of 18. At that point, they are technically adults and are on their own. Their support system is suddenly gone.

In 2006, there were 536 youth, statewide, who left the system solely because of their age. Research shows these youth are at greater risk for poverty, homelessness, unemployment and other negative outcomes. They need information, advice and guidance to make good choices.

The Michigan Department of Human Services has launched a Web site specifically for youth in foster care who are "aging out." The site is a result of recommendations made by the Statewide Task Force on Youth Transitioning from Foster Care, which included input directly from foster kids.

Youth boards, part of the Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative, have been formed to assist in maintaining the Web site, to keep the information updated and relevant, and to provide limited financial support to foster kids in transition.

The Web site is user- friendly and geared to provide not only factual information but networking possibilities and role models. Did you know that basketball great Alonzo Mourning, legendary baseball great Babe Ruth, singer/actress Cher, actor/comedian Eddie Murphy, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, and The Beatles' John Lennon were foster children?

Short of legislation to increase services, which the Michigan County Social Services Association has supported, the Web site is a giant step ahead to make available a wealth of information for young people transitioning to independent living. We would like to acknowledge the parties that collaborated to make this Web site possible and to encourage young people facing this transition to access the Web site.

Although the Web site was specifically designed to assist youth in transition from foster care, the information and access to it are available to any young person in need of such assistance.

The Web site address is [www.michigan.gov/fyit](http://www.michigan.gov/fyit). Please use it and share it. It just might make the difference between success and failure.

Mel Haga is the executive

director of the Michigan County Social Services

Association.



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## Kinship event is Sept. 20

CHARLOTTE — Kinship care is defined as the provision of full-time nurturing and protection of children by adults other than biological parents. This often happens when original families are torn apart by substance abuse, incarceration, death, mental and physical illness, AIDS, and child abuse and neglect. In Eaton County, it is estimated that over 600 grandparents and other relatives are providing kinship care for children birth to 18 years of age.

On Thursday, Sept. 20, Strong Families Safe Children and the MSU Kinship Resource Center will collaborate to provide the Eaton County Kinship Care Event. Starting at 5:30 p.m. with a light dinner for busy families, the event will include speakers, beginning at 6 p.m., on the legal issues of kinship care and what families can do to help provide financial assistance when a child is college bound.

An open panel discussion will be held to address questions. Community agencies have been invited to have resource tables which families can visit to get additional information for their specific needs. Activities and play will be provided for children.

This event is for anyone who is providing kinship care, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, fictive kin, guardians, adoptive parents, and foster parents. The event will be held at the Eaton Intermediate School District, 1790 E. Packard Hwy., Charlotte (behind Walmart), Sept. 20 from 5:30-8 p.m. To register, call (517) 543-2536. Be prepared to leave your name, phone number, address, number of adults, number of children, and ages of children.

— *From Strong Families Safe Children.*

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# Niles Daily Star

## ONLINE EDITION

[Print Page](#)

CERT class starts soon

By JOHN EBY / Niles Daily Star  
*Saturday, September 8, 2007 12:46 AM EDT*

CASSOPOLIS -Undersheriff Rick Behnke reminded the Cass County Board of Commissioners Thursday CERT, which stands for Community Emergency Response Team, starts class Monday, Sept. 17.

"This is an opportunity for citizens to become involved in helping with emergency situations and major events such as the fair," Behnke said.

Classes will be from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. at the Cass County Emergency Operations Center (EOC), 130 N. Broadway, Cassopolis on Wednesday nights for eight-weeks.

The series will culminate on Nov. 7 with a simulated disaster exercise and graduation.

Classes are free, but pre-registration is required.

For questions contact Patti Kolden at the Cass County Sheriff's Office by dialing (269) 445-8644, ext. 217, and join the ranks of the 130-plus Cass County CERT volunteers who have completed the course to date.

County Administrator Terry Proctor said two resolutions related to amending the Nov. 9, 1989, Cass County E911 service plan and adopting a monthly 911 surcharge within the county were tabled because the Legislature has not acted yet. "That's caught up in the political debate on the (state) budget," Proctor said. "We'll have to put it on a future agenda after the Legislature acts."

Proctor said new Emergency Management Coordinator Dave Smith (445-1460) is working on 13 projects, including a Sept. 20 tabletop exercise and a \$600 LEPC (Local Emergency Planning Committee) grant.

On Saturday, Michigan State University Extension organized an agricultural tour for the board. Nine of the 15 commissioners signed up to participate.

Commissioners approved the sale of two forfeiture parcels on Bulhand Road for \$198,000 to RBS Properties of Elkhart, Ind.

The board on June 7 authorized an auction, which Meadows Auction Services conducted Aug. 25.

Commissioners also approved six motions to "clean up" the budget for the fiscal year ending Sept. 30, including an additional \$8,000 to the medical examiner's budget for more deaths and autopsies than anticipated; \$990 for the sheriff's SCAAP (State Criminal Alien Assistance Program) grant; \$5,500 for the sheriff's justice training grant, which showed a fund balance of \$13,804.25; \$45,000 for the Department of Human Services (DHS) child care fund budget, which had a fund balance of \$79,180.90; and \$28,000 for the social welfare fund budget, with a \$51,812.32 fund balance; and a \$10,000 drain fund loan to Drain Commissioner Jeff VanBelle from the delinquent tax revolving fund. He will assess various drain districts to repay the sum by March 3, 2008, at an interest rate of 5.32 percent per annum. The \$10,000 compares to \$15,000 last year, Bickel noted.

Proctor explained that SCAAP pertains to federal payments to localities that incur correctional officer salary costs for incarcerating certain undocumented aliens.

"Our county occasionally arrests undocumented aliens who end up in our county jail," Proctor said. "We're able to get a little reimbursement back from the federal government for having that person in our jail. It amounts to about \$990 for the last year."



## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### Economist: Preschool really pays off in the long run

Saturday, September 08, 2007

What's the best way to stimulate Michigan's economy for generations to come?

Cut taxes?

Offer business subsidies?

A local economist says investing in preschool offers twice the potential job growth compared to traditional economic development strategies in the long term.

The study by Tim Bartik, an economist at the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research and a member of the Kalamazoo Public Schools Board of Education, can be read in its entirety at [www.upjohninst.org](http://www.upjohninst.org).

Bartik says his analysis is based on a high-quality preschool, and he readily concedes that such programs are expensive. But for every \$1 spent on the program, Bartik estimates an eventual payoff of \$2.78.

He points to a mild economic benefit in three areas:

- The economic stimulus provided by pumping money into the economy to operate the preschools.
- The financial boost for families who would receive, in effect, free child care.
- The benefit to the K-12 system, since preschool graduates are less likely to need special education or repeat a grade.

The real payoff, he says, is the long-term benefit for preschool graduates, pointing to research that indicates low-income children who have gone through preschool are more likely than their peers to graduate from high school and earn higher wages.

A big downside of investing in preschool is that most of the economic benefits don't occur until 12 or so years down the road. Bartik estimates that if an equal amount were spent this year on preschool and a traditional economic-development strategy, the traditional strategy would yield a higher payoff until 2033, at which point the benefits of the preschool investment continue to climb while the other investment plateaus. By 2080, that money spent in 2007 on preschool has generated twice the number of jobs as the money spent on traditional economic development.

So does Bartik think people are willing to wait so long for a return on their investment?

“You put out what the right policy would be, and you have to extract that from people's political interests,” he said. “If you're trying to create jobs and you need to do it in the next two to three years, preschool can do only a little in that regard.

“But the really interesting news from the preschool stuff is that the eventual effect on high school graduation rates and employment rates is quite high, and the evidence for that is quite strong,” he said.

Bartik concludes his study: “Even the most cautious and conservative estimates, which considerably scale back the effects per participant from the most rigorous studies, still yield large benefits for state economies and the national economy.”

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Article published Sep 6, 2007

## Give your youngsters a great start

By Alison Bergsieker  
STAFF WRITER

Before you know it, you're little toddler will transform into a massive high school football player, a solo violinist or even a member of Congress.

But while they're still learning to talk, you can help get them ready for the years ahead.

Great Start Collaborative-Oakland will hold a community forum on early childhood education at Building Blocks Preschool and Daycare in Highland on Sept. 13.

Parents, caregivers, child care providers, educators, stakeholders and all who care about children are invited to attend.

Building Blocks Director Emily Hotchkiss said the forum will focus on the importance of early childhood for children ages birth to five.

"We really want to partner with parents," Hotchkiss said. "The basics behind it is just getting the community together and educating them on what the needs of our children are. We want to let parents know that their voices can be heard."

The forum will provide information about services available for young children and will discuss statistics regarding the age group in Oakland County.

The free even is from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. For more information and to register call (248)681-9192 ext. 27 or visit [www.greatstartforkids-oakland.org](http://www.greatstartforkids-oakland.org).

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## Unwilling dad goes to Court of Appeals

Sunday, September 09, 2007

**AMY PAYNE**

### THE SAGINAW NEWS

The case nicknamed "the Roe vs. Wade for Men" is heading to the U.S. Court of Appeals.

Saginaw Township resident Matt Dubay, a 26-year-old computer programmer for Yeo & Yeo Computer Consulting, sued his former girlfriend, Lauren Wells, in March 2006 to try to avoid paying child support, saying Wells knew he did not want a child and had assured him that she could not get pregnant.

U.S. District Judge David M. Lawson threw out the case in July 2006, calling it "frivolous" and ruled that Dubay must continue to pay \$500 a month for child support.

Dubay is appealing the ruling. Oral arguments will begin at 1:30 p.m. Monday before the Sixth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in Cincinnati.

The Saginaw News could not reach Dubay or Wells for comment Saturday.

Dubay's Southfield-based attorney, Jeffery A. Cojocar, has said he intends to take the case to the U.S. Supreme Court, if necessary.

If a pregnant woman can opt out of motherhood through abortion or adoption, a man who causes an unintended pregnancy should have the choice of declining the financial burden of fatherhood, Dubay has said, leading the Long Island, N.Y.-based National Center for Men to dub the lawsuit "the Roe vs. Wade for Men," referring to the 1973 case that legalized abortion.

State courts have ruled that society's interest in ensuring that children receive financial support from two parents outweighs any inequity men might face.

The suit, originally filed in U.S. District Court in Bay City, also names Saginaw County Prosecutor Michael D. Thomas and State Attorney Mike Cox as defendants, as Dubay has claimed Thomas and Cox are upholding a paternity law that is unconstitutional because it requires the father to pay child support even if he did not want the child to be born.

Wells, also a Saginaw Township resident, is raising their 2-year-old daughter, Elisabeth, while working and attending school.

The case gathered national media attention and generated vigorous discussion on the Internet. Phil McGraw -- better known as television psychologist Dr. Phil -- hosted Dubay on his nationally syndicated show in April 2006. McGraw said the problem stems from "young people having sex in uncommitted relationships, where these things haven't been discussed in advance." v

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**DETROIT** -- Wayne County officials said Friday they are looking to privatize the bulk of the agency that handles paternity and child-support collection services.

The county's Friend of the Court operations are the state's largest, and are widely considered understaffed and unresponsive. The move to seek bids by private companies to take over a sizable portion of the agency is seen as a way to cut the county's \$900,000 annual cost while encouraging better child support collections by creating a financial incentive for the company that handles them.

Mary Beth Kelly, chief judge of Wayne Circuit Court, said the change would protect the 169 existing jobs and would add 56 others. She acknowledged it could mean lower wages or reduced benefits, but said the arrangement provides more protections for current workers than similar moves around the country. Any annual profit by the winning bidder would be "modest," Kelly said, though she could not estimate it.

The goal, she said, is to make the system more efficient.

"Right now it takes nine months to get child support modifications through the system," Kelly said. "That's because of our staffing levels. That's unacceptable."

Union members have criticized the plan, saying it will jeopardize jobs and line pockets of a company with money intended for children.

"We are considering filing a charge" with the Michigan Employment Relations Commission, said Albert Garrett, president of the Council 25 chapter of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees that represents county Friend of the Court workers. He said the union plans two protests this month against the proposal.

Friend of the Court collected \$314 million in child support last year, more than 21 percent of the state's total.

Kelly said the privatization plan would not begin before March.

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# Child Support What a Joke!

Gaylord Herald Times

Posted: Sunday, September 9, 2007 12:04 PM EDT

Deb

None of you have your child support fact straight! The fact of the matter is, if child support is owed in Otsego County the only way they will even consider picking up a dead beat is if they live in OTSEGO COUNTY! I have been dealing with the Otsego Co FOC for over 12 years now. They are a joke! I have recently (December of 2006) given them a google map from the Otsego Co Sheriff's Dept driveway to the driveway of the "deadbeat" who now owes over 55,000.00 in past child support. I have given them the name, address, and phone number of where he is employed in Florida. Nothing, he is still living in the same location and still working in the same place. Guess if you owe child support in Otsego County and want to get away with not paying JUST MOVE! I also wrote a letter to the editor concerning this matter, of course it was never printed! What a joke.



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Article published Sep 9, 2007

## Resource center lands grant for new program

By LeAnne Rogers  
STAFF WRITER

A new support group for families of younger children will be offered by the Family Resource Center thanks to a \$50,000 state grant.

Awarded as a Governor's Discretionary Grant from the Office of Drug Control Policy, the grant will be used to offer the Strengthening Families program beginning in January. The program serves families with youngsters 6-11 years old.

"It's a substance abuse and delinquency program. It's a group program that meets once a week," said Family Resource Center Director Monica Fulton.

The program is aimed at being proactive in helping families deal with concerns before they become problems, she said.

"Like if a kid tends to be a follower and do what others do, or if a child is a leader, we'd want those leadership skills to go in a positive direction," Fulton said. "Parents are wondering how they keep their kids from falling apart. Some parents have had successes they can share. It's about strengthening families and nurturing children to be successful adults."

The grant funding becomes available Oct. 1 when the state fiscal year begins. Once program staff is hired and materials purchased, Fulton expects to begin registering families in November. The program would get under way in January with a second session expected towards the end of the school year.

Each session would accommodate 15 families.

"We would encourage all the siblings in the family to participate," said Fulton.

The grant process was very competitive with \$4.3 million in requests received for the \$2.4 million that was available. One criteria for the funding was that the program be what is called an evidence-based program - one that has had proven success in other communities.

"Strengthening Families is one of the top programs in the nation. That's why we went with it," Fulton said.

Fulton credited the grant success in part to Garden City's history of community support, noting the Youth Assistance Program has been offered locally since the early 1980s and expanded into the Family Resource Center.

"We have a strong community coalition, we have involved parents and community leaders who are actively supportive," said Fulton. "It was a very comprehensive, tight application. We've really got a handle on the needs of the community and what they are looking for. That really benefited us."

A Community Coalition member, Fire Chief Bill Forbush was pleased the Family Resource Center had received the grant.

"I think Monica is being modest. A lot of the credit goes to her - she's tenacious. There is a lot of teamwork, too. The Family Resource Center is very inclusive," said Forbush. "A lot of credit goes to Monica's skills writing grants and going after them."

Fulton works very closely with Parks and Recreation Director Patricia McKarge, herself a former Youth Assistance director.

"A lot of people don't realize that. Pat's very talented at grant writing, too. They make a very good team," he said.

The Strengthening Families program will be open to residents throughout western Wayne County. Although registration isn't under way yet, parents interested in participating in the program can call the Family Resource Center for more information at (734) 793-1860.

[lrogers@hometownlife.com](mailto:lrogers@hometownlife.com) | (734) 953-2103

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**Some residents skeptical parolee is Lansing killer**

September 9, 2007

BY JIM SCHAEFER and SUZETTE HACKNEY

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITERS

He fathered at least four children with three women, refused to pay child support and, with stints in prison, was a stranger to his kids.

At 28, Matthew Macon is a flawed man. But a serial killer?

**Advertisement**

Contrasting images emerged last week in the working-class neighborhoods of Lansing, where police issued the all-clear but some residents are still nervous.

Officials said Macon killed five women in just more than four weeks, all single, all beaten and at least one left for dead with mortal injuries. The mayor of Lansing called Macon a monster. There are similarities between the crimes Macon is accused of today and those he committed in his past. But to two of the women who had children with Macon, their reaction is: No way, not him.

"He was never violent or disrespectful towards me," said a 28-year-old woman with an 8-year-old daughter fathered by Macon. "He had the utmost respect for me and other women around him. He's a really good person."

A 31-year-old woman who has two children with Macon went farther: "I've never even seen him get mad. ...We've never even been in an argument."

Both women asked the Free Press not to print their names for fear of harm to their children, who don't know their father is accused of heinous crimes.

Despite their personal history with Macon -- both women won court judgments against him for child support, one for an arrearage of nearly \$17,000 -- the mothers said the accusations hit them hard.

"It hurts. ... I think they would like to think they got the right guy," said the 31-year-old, whose daughters are 8 and 3. "I haven't talked to the kids. My main goal right now is to keep myself and my kids out of this."

The 28-year-old woman, who has four other children in addition to her daughter with Macon, said, "I'm just going to wait to see how everything falls before I try to sit down and explain to her what's going on. Because he's always in and out of prison, I've already spent a lot of time trying to tell her stories, like that he's on vacation."

Both women said Macon may be an absentee dad, but they don't believe he's capable of the allegations against him. They said he was never physically abusive toward them.

The third mother, who has a 2-year-old son with Macon, could not be located.

Words of support from the mothers, childhood friends and even some strangers in Lansing clash with descriptions of Macon in court records, which detail a troubled childhood and teenage years in which he committed two sexual assaults.

At age 14, Macon admitted he sexually assaulted a girl younger than 13 with a stick in his mother's home. Of the five women killed in Lansing in July and August, at least one, Deborah Cooke, had been sexually assaulted with a stick, according to the Lansing State Journal. Macon was arrested Aug. 28 after police said he attacked a 56-year-old woman in her Lansing home on Jones Street. Her dog scared him off. He is charged in that attack, an earlier home invasion and one of the recent deaths. Police said they expect to charge him in at least four more deaths and are looking at his possible involvement in other crimes.

In 2001, Macon was sentenced to two to 10 years in prison for robbing a woman of her purse after grabbing her by the throat. He was paroled twice but returned to prison both times on parole violations. After his most recent parole June 26, Macon returned to the Lansing area, his hometown.

A month later, community activist Ruth Hallman, 76, was severely beaten in her home. She died of her injuries on July 28. Attacks on four other women followed.

### **Violent childhood**

Violence marred Macon's childhood during the early 1980s. According to court records, when he was about 4, his father sexually assaulted a young stepdaughter in their home. It is unclear whether the father was charged, but court files show the allegation was substantiated. Records describe Jim Henry Macon Jr., a factory worker, as a violent alcoholic. He could not be reached for comment.

Court records describe one night in 1984 when Jim Macon broke down the front door of his wife's home, a house from which he was barred by court order, and snatched Matthew Macon and his brother while their mom gave them a bath. He took both boys out into a thunderstorm, then to his home, records show. Police officers took the boys back to their mother.

Jim Macon returned that night and chased his wife down the road swinging a bat and threatening to kill everyone on the street, court records show.

Carletta Jackson, 31, Macon's childhood friend who grew up across the street from him, said his family had its troubles, but nothing that she viewed as extreme. The boy lived with five siblings, including two sisters, and spent time with his grandmother, too.

"He had all those sisters in his family. Why would he want to come out and do something so outrageous?" Jackson asked. "For those boys and that family, women were like gold to them."

Matthew Macon spent his teen years in juvenile detention and, after the sexual assault with a stick, was placed in sexual offender programs.

Family members of a man convicted in the 2005 murder of a Lansing Community College professor have asked police to take another look at the case. Carolyn Kronenberg was sexually assaulted with a remote control and beaten to death in her classroom.

Claude McCollum, an off-and-on student at the college, is serving life in prison without parole for the Kronenberg death. A newspaper report during his trial said DNA found under the victim's nails did not match McCollum's.

### **Skepticism about guilt**

Police have professed that the streets are again safe, yet some still worry.

They offer several arguments: A composite sketch doesn't look like Macon. He has yet to be charged in more than one killing. And the last death, Karen Delgado Yates, occurred a day after he was behind bars.

Yates was found Aug. 29, the day after Macon was arrested, lying naked on her back in the bathroom of a vacant house on Hickory Street, a few blocks from where Cooke was found dead in a park. Yates died on the way to a hospital.

It is not clear when she was attacked.

Police said the big break in the case came the day before Yates' death, when the woman was attacked on Jones Street. She gave police a description and that led to Macon's arrest that day in Lansing.

Ana Maria Flores, 61, a neighbor walking her dogs last week on Jones Street, said she spoke with the woman just before the assault. Flores, who walks her four dogs twice a day, saw the woman putting in the yard. They talked about her excitement at having time off work to do things at the house.

As they parted, the woman warned Flores to be careful because a killer was on the loose.

"I went to have lunch with my son, and by the time we came back, we saw all these cops all over our neighborhood," said Flores, who echoed skepticism that police have the right man. "Now if I see a guy coming my way ... I get scared."

As if on cue, her son, Roberto Flores, 37, pulled around the corner in his SUV. He had been out looking for his mother, concerned when she took longer than usual on her walk.

Behind her, the surviving victim's house remained shuttered. The woman likely will have to testify against Macon, but she is not ready to publicly talk about the attack.

Reached by phone, she simply said, "I'm doing OK."



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Published September 10, 2007

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## Lansing officer found guilty of harassing ex-girlfriend

Midday update

Kevin Grasha  
Lansing State Journal

JACKSON - A Lansing police officer has been found guilty of harassing his former girlfriend over the telephone, but not guilty of a domestic violence charge.

Robert Vargas, who has worked for the department for about a decade, has been on paid administrative leave since he was arrested after a May 22 incident at the woman's Blackman Township home. They had recently broken up, police said.

The verdict came Friday after a jury trial in Jackson County District Court. Both charges were misdemeanors.

An internal investigation has been ongoing, Police Chief Mark Alley said today. He could not say when it would be completed.

"Discipline could include, but is not limited to, termination of employment," Alley said, adding: "Whether it's a misdemeanor or a felony, we look at the facts surrounding the incident on a case-by-case basis and make a determination from there."

A sentencing hearing is scheduled for next month.

Read more on this story in Tuesday's State Journal.

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# ClickOnDetroit.com

## Search Continues For Man Accused Of Shooting Wife

POSTED: 1:36 pm EDT September 7, 2007  
UPDATED: 12:06 pm EDT September 10, 2007

**WATERFORD TOWNSHIP, Mich.** -- Waterford police are still looking for a man who allegedly shot his wife on Friday morning. Police used tracking dogs throughout the weekend to help in the search for Edward Stenberg, 57, of Waterford.

Police said Stenberg shot and killed his wife. Police said he is 5 feet 10 inches tall and weighs 175 pounds.

Around 11 p.m. Friday police used two bomb robots to search a home on Mann Road near Clintonville on the border of Waterford and Independence Township after receiving a tip that the vehicle used by Stenberg was seen in the area.

"We found the vehicle and now we are looking for him," Waterford Police Chief Dan McCraw said.

Police responded to a report of shots fired at Stenberg's home Friday. When they arrived, they found Laura Ann Stenberg, 46, shot.

She was transferred to a local hospital where she later died

Police said her son Jason Brindley, 28, told them he saw Stenberg holding the gun on his mother. He said he left and then he heard gun shots.

Stenberg has a history of domestic abuse, according to police. He was jailed in April 2006 after pleading no contest to assault with intent to do great bodily harm less than murder.

Anyone with information is asked to call the Waterford Township Police Department at 248-674-0351.

Stay with Local 4 News and ClickOnDetroit.com as more information becomes available.

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Article published Sep 9, 2007

Keeping children insured

**Elizabeth Huff**

*The Enquirer*

LuGenia Traylor, a single mom in Battle Creek, has eked out a living taking care of other people's kids.

Like many working poor, she earns too much to receive Medicaid benefits and pays her own medical expenses. At 49 years old, she's basically healthy and doesn't worry about it.

But because of MICHild, Traylor has not had to worry about her daughter's medical expenses. The federal- and state-funded MICHild has provided for her 15-year-old daughter Jonice Gatson's dental checkups, glasses, immunizations and hospital visits — like the time she found out she was allergic to the fiberglass in a pool kickboard — for \$5 a month.

"It gives me peace of mind," Traylor said.

In 1997, Congress designated \$40 billion over 10 years to help states expand health insurance programs for kids, even if their parents didn't qualify for Medicaid.

Now federal funding for the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), which in Michigan funds programs designed to keep low-income kids covered with full benefit health insurance and some adults with basic coverage, is up for renewal in Congress.

## KEEPING KIDS COVERED

Most federal legislators support covering low-income children's medical expenses in order to keep a community healthy by keeping its kids healthy.

"There's no excuse for a wealthy country like ours not to cover its kids," said Laura Appel, a former state policy analyst who worked on initial legislation that created MICHild.

Federal legislators want to expand the program to cover more kids, but to what extent is under debate in Congress. How much money will trickle down to help people in Calhoun County is unknown.

President George W. Bush wants to continue funding the program at \$5 billion above current spending over the next five years. The president has vowed to veto anything more, said Appel, who is now senior director of policy and advocacy for the Lansing-based Michigan Health & Hospital Association. The U.S. House and Senate, however, put forth their own more expensive bills intended to cover millions more children by either expanding eligibility or reaching children already eligible but not covered.

Before an August recess, the House approved a bill that would increase funding by \$50 billion over five years; the Senate chose a \$35 billion increase that has more bipartisan support.

Calling the House bill "an absolute train wreck," U.S. Rep. Tim Walberg, R-Tipton, said he opposes any significant increase to current spending on the program, saying it is a step toward national health care at taxpayers' expense.

"Bottom line is this is a backdoor attempt at Hillary Care that is not doing what it was intended to do, to take care of low-income children," said Walberg, whose district includes Battle Creek.

U.S. Sens. Debbie Stabenow and Carl Levin, both Democrats, support a bill that would continue to ensure that the approximately 6.6 million children nationwide in SCHIP programs remain covered and that those who are eligible get coverage.

Legislators have yet to compromise before the current block grant expires Sept. 30, and state community health officials are anxiously awaiting an outcome.

## WHOM DOES IT HELP?

Michigan relies on SCHIP funding to run MICHild, Healthy Kids and the Adult Benefits Waiver, said T.J. Bucholz, spokesman for the state

Department of Community Health.

- MICHild offers low-cost medical, dental, vision and mental health coverage to children in the 150 to 200 percent of the federal poverty level — kids who wouldn't qualify for Medicaid. Nearly 8,000 Calhoun County children were enrolled in July, said Dottie-Kay Bowersox, health officer for the Calhoun County Department of Public Health.
- Healthy Kids expanded Medicaid to allow kids between 100 and 150 percent of poverty to stay on Medicaid after they turn 16 years old. About 7,300 children were signed up in Calhoun County in July, Bowersox said.
- The Adult Benefits Waiver began in 2004 to utilize unused SCHIP dollars for adults at 35 percent of poverty. They pay minimal copays for outpatient visits, prescriptions and some laboratory work. Typically, people who are unemployed but don't qualify for Medicaid fit this category. In 2006, 1,300 Calhoun County adults used the program, according to Samantha Pearl, executive director for the Calhoun Health Plan.

As of January, about 32,000 children statewide were enrolled in MICHild, according to the Michigan League for Human Services, a Lansing-based policy group. Many more qualify, but for whatever reason, remain uninsured.

An estimated 110,000 out of a total of 170,000 uninsured Michigan kids are eligible for MICHild or Healthy Kids, but are not enrolled, as stated in a May report by Families USA, a Washington, D.C.-based health care advocacy group.

"I think it's shocking to all of us that there are still people out there," Appel said. She speculated that some people may not trust the program, may travel frequently, may not be interested, or may not know about it due to the lack of outreach funding available in Michigan.

Funding for outreach was cut off in 2003 and enrollment has declined since then, according to the Michigan League for Human Services.

## **HURDLES TO KIDS' HEALTH**

County Health Officer Bowersox, however, questions whether an increase in funding at the federal level will have a significant impact on Calhoun County's kids.

Increasing enrollment means more staff and facilities would need to be dedicated to the program, she said. Unless Michigan is willing to increase revenue through taxes, or take money away from other programs, there would be no way for the state to match more SCHIP funding.

"Just because the federal government may expand their revenue doesn't mean it's going to affect us locally," she said. "It's very difficult to say what it's going to look like once it gets down to the local level."

With budget problems of its own, it is unlikely that Michigan would expand the eligibility for MICHild.

"We have to have the matching dollars to do that," Appel said. "I haven't heard anyone wanting to expand it."

## **TAKING THE LEAP**

Congress returned to session this month and is expected to find a compromise between the \$50 billion House and \$35 billion Senate bills that will garner enough support to override a presidential veto.

They'll have to reach an agreement to continue the program, Appel said. Most legislators recognize the program works because it gives states flexibility and makes children's health a priority.

Increased funding would ensure that the program continues to help families like Dorothy Evans of Albion. MICHild insured three foster children in her care before she was able to adopt them and bring them onto Medicaid.

"It covered just about everything they needed," said the 57-year-old full-time volunteer for Albion Interfaith Ministries. "They got their shots, they got their regular exams. That's about all they ever needed, and the dentist."

In Michigan, increased funding could pay for outreach programs to get more of those 110,000 kids onto programs where they are eligible.

"In terms of our ability to continue what we are doing is a big deal," Appel said. "And to increase outreach in the future, new funding will certainly help with that."

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Article published Sep 9, 2007  
Michigan offers aid to poor adults  
**Elizabeth Huff**  
*The Enquirer*

Some adults in Michigan are getting medical help from funding originally set aside to cover kids.

Up to 62,000 adults in Michigan can get their prescriptions and office visits covered by State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) money. SCHIP was created 10 years ago to provide health insurance to low-income kids and is now up for renewal in Congress. About 32,000 kids are enrolled in MICHild, Michigan's full-benefit SCHIP-funded program.

Adults also are using those funds because when health officials have enrolled kids in MICHild, they usually found that three out of four kids already qualified for Medicaid. That left unused money in the MICHild pot, said T.J. Bucholz, spokesman for the Michigan Department of Community Health.

"We cover children first, but we still had dollars that we were sending back to Washington," he said.

As of February 2007, Michigan was one of 14 states with an approved Adult Benefits Waiver, according to the Government Accountability Office.

It allows extra funds to go to very poor adults, like Cheryl Dennis and her housemate, Phillip Vickery.

He was forced to quit the carpeting business because of breathing problems and has had no significant income since then, he said. While he waits for Medicaid disability approval or a new job, he relies on the Adult Benefits Waiver.

"Without it, there's no way that I could afford the blood pressure medication or the medication for my nebulizer (a device that vaporizes medicine)," he said. "I imagine I would end up in the hospital or dead."

But the program is at risk of being eliminated.

The U.S. House put forth a bill that would allow Michigan to continue offering unchanged its three SCHIP programs — MICHild, Healthy Kids and the Adult Benefits Waiver. A Senate version, however, would cut adults out of the deal, said Laura Appel, senior director of policy and advocacy for the Lansing-based Michigan Health & Hospital Association.

The less-expensive Senate version has broader bipartisan support than the House version, in part because it brings the focus of SCHIP back on kids. In Michigan, however, the focus has already been on getting kids insured and keeping them covered.

Between 2003 and 2005, Michigan had the second-lowest rate of uninsured children in the nation, according to the GAO. Only Vermont's rate was lower.

"We do a good job of taking care of children in the Medicaid programs," said Samantha Pearl, executive director of Calhoun Health Plan. "It would really be devastating if the ABW program went away."

It typically covers adults who've fallen on hard times, who don't have access to employer-sponsored insurance and who wouldn't be able to claim Medicaid, she said.

"The Adult Benefits Waiver is very minimal coverage, but it's valuable to people because it reduces the strain on our hospital systems," Appel said.

Up to 62,000 Michigan adults can be on the Adult Benefits Waiver, which pays for prescriptions and office visits, but not medical, dental or inpatient visits. They have to make less than 35 percent of the federal poverty level, which is \$3,574 for a single person, and not already qualify for Medicaid.

"So they really have to be poor in order to qualify," Pearl said.

Now about 40,000 people are on the program, Pearl said. Between 700 and 1,300 Calhoun County people used the program in 2006.



MIChild, a kids-only SCHIP-funded program, on the other hand, provides about 32,000 children across the state with low-cost medical, dental, vision and mental health insurance even when their parents don't qualify for Medicaid.

The Adult Benefits Waiver has helped Dennis avoid the emergency room. She made just \$2,023 last year working temporary jobs. Though she has at least 15 years experience operating a forklift, she hasn't found full-time employment in two years.

Under the waiver program, Dennis paid \$3 for office visits and \$1 prescription copays to control her asthma, diabetes, high blood pressure, cholesterol and arthritis.

"It's not the best coverage in the world. It doesn't cover everything, but it covers basics," she said. "It is keeping us healthy, rather than being a burden to the state."

People without children who are not disabled or pregnant and do not fit the specific requirements for Medicaid may qualify for the Adult Benefits Waiver.

Those who are eligible can sign up for the program through the Department of Human Service during a typically one- to two-month open enrollment period. Calhoun County adults who qualify for coverage before enrollment opens can use Calhoun Health Plan's Part B coverage in the meantime.

*Elizabeth Huff can be reached at 966-0684 or [ehuff@battlecr.gannett.com](mailto:ehuff@battlecr.gannett.com).*

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# Feds reject New York's bid to expand eligibility for children's insurance

KEVIN FREKING

*Associated Press Writer*

WASHINGTON — The Bush administration demonstrated Friday it will strictly adhere to new guidelines that limit the scope of a popular children's health insurance program. It rejected an application from New York to let more middle-income families participate.

The administration issued its guidelines just three weeks ago. Democratic lawmakers and governors from both parties have said the rules are misguided and will result in more uninsured children. The administration says the rules will refocus the program on the low-income people it was intended to serve.

When a state expands eligibility to higher-income children, the guidelines require the state to show that it has enrolled at least 95 percent of eligible poor children in public health programs. Poor children in this instance are families with incomes below 200 percent of the poverty level — \$34,340 for a family of three.

New York sought to expand eligibility in the State Children's Health Insurance Program to 400 percent of the federal poverty level, or \$68,680 for a family of three — the highest level in the nation.

New York did not show that it met the new 95 percent threshold.

"New York has not demonstrated that its program operates in an effective and efficient manner with respect to the core population of targeted low-income children," said Kerry Weems, acting administrator for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Under the program, the federal government and the states subsidize the cost of health coverage.

Rep. Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., called the Bush administration's decision "unconscionable."

"It is clear the administration is spoiling for a fight and it's unfortunate he has chosen children's health care," said Rangel, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee.

Democratic Gov. Eliot Spitzer said the state is prepared to pursue legal action to challenge the guidelines.

"Today's federal decision is a cruel blow to New York's uninsured children, and to uninsured families across the country," Spitzer said.

Weems noted that the new guidelines require New York to make sure that middle-income children have been uninsured for at least a year before allowing them into SCHIP. Such a requirement is designed to keep families from dropping private health insurance so that they could get cheaper or better coverage through public programs.

New York's application called for a six-month waiting period. State officials have said they could not justify making children wait a year for health coverage.

"I cannot find that New York meets the requirement for reasonable procedures to prevent substitution of coverage," Weems said in his letter to New York officials.

Democratic lawmakers will attempt to overturn the new guidelines in coming months as Congress considers renewing the children's program for an additional five years. Under current spending levels, SCHIP would cost about \$25 billion over the next five years.

The House passed legislation in early August that would raise spending on SCHIP to about \$75 billion over five years. The Senate passed a bill raising spending to about \$60 billion. A conference committee will try to work out the differences in the two bills, but so far, such a committee has not been formed. The program expires on Sept. 30, unless Congress approves an extension.

The administration has proposed spending of about \$30 billion, and the president has promised to veto the House or Senate versions if either reaches his desk.

Rep. Pete Stark, D-Calif., said Thursday that he was confident Democrats could overturn the guidelines.

"It's so universally unpopular, we'll find a way," Stark said.

But, most House Republicans support the president's vision of how the SCHIP program should work. Some of them would have to side with Democrats if Bush decided to veto legislation overturning the guidelines.

"Some states have expanded the program to adults who are hardly needy, much less poor, and now the Democratic majority sees a chance to use the SCHIP reauthorization to finally accomplish what the Clinton administration failed to do, put government bureaucrats in charge of everyone's health care," Rep. Joe Barton, R-Texas, said in a press release Thursday.

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On the Net:

State Children's Health Insurance Program:

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/home/schip.asp>

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## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### Young and (they hope) healthy 18-34 age group lacks health insurance

Saturday, September 08, 2007

By Chris Killian

Erin Spafford, a young Kalamazoo woman who had been healthy her whole life, noticed a lump on her neck about a year ago, went to the doctor and prepared for the worst.

Doctors at first thought the then-20-year-old might have a cancer called lymphoma, but after a surgical procedure to remove the lump, and a subsequent tissue biopsy, it was determined that she simply had an infected lymph node.

The scare of potentially having a serious disease was followed by the anxiety of how she would pay for the procedure.

Spafford lost coverage under her parents' health insurance policy when she turned 18 because she didn't go to college. She now works as a manager at the Crow's Nest restaurant in Kalamazoo, a job that doesn't offer health insurance.

The 21-year-old Spafford is one of more than 19 million young adults nationwide -- from ages 18 to 34 -- who don't have health insurance, either by choice or because they can't afford it, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

In 2006, young people ages 18 to 34 made up 50.6 percent of the nation's uninsured adult population, according to data from the Employee Benefit Research Association. By comparison, people ages 20 to 34 made up only 20.1 percent of the total population, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2005 American Community Survey.

"When our younger generations look into having health insurance, many of them are simply choosing to go without due to the high cost," said Erin Campbell, public information officer for the Kalamazoo County Health Department. "Many say, 'Hmmm, insurance? Yeah, I'll be fine,' but if you are going without insurance, you're obviously taking a serious gamble."

Health Alliance Plan and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan are among insurers that have launched or redesigned products in the past year to cater to young adults with no coverage. (Insurers also are developing individual plans for adults in their 40s, 50s and 60s who don't have workplace insurance and aren't yet eligible for Medicare.)

Plans for young adults vary in cost, from bare-bones catastrophic coverage with premiums of less than \$50 to more-comprehensive coverage that can cost hundreds of dollars a month.

The cheapest policies often come with trade-offs, including deductibles in the thousands of dollars and no coverage for prescriptions and maternity care.

"I've been looking into some different (insurance) policies, but not too deeply," Spafford said. "They're just too expensive, and the affordable plans don't offer that much coverage."

So Spafford lives without insurance, paying off about \$100 a month on the nearly \$2,000 she owes to seven doctors for the pre- and post-op care she received.

"When I first started paying it off, it was really tough," she said. "But now I guess I'm getting used to it."

Gazette staff writer John Liberty and the Associated Press contributed to this report.



## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### Michigan's uninsured

Saturday, September 08, 2007

Percentages of the state's uninsured that fall into various age groups:

Ages 0-9: 5.5 percent

Ages 10-19: 10.5 percent (12.9 percent of state's population)

Ages 20-29: 26.3 percent (14.5 percent of state's population)

Ages 30-39: 19.5 percent (13.3 percent of state's population)

Ages 40-49: 20.3 percent (13.2 percent of state's population)

Ages 50-59: 14.7 percent (15.4 percent of state's population)

Ages 60-64: 3.2 percent (4.6 percent of state's population)

Total state population: 10.1 million people.

Sources: State Planning Project for the Uninsured report of August 2006 and the Missouri Census Data Center, a partner with the U.S. Census Bureau since 1979.

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## Area's health department appoints medical director

CHARLOTTE — Dr. Christina Helms has been appointed the primary care medical director for the Barry-Eaton County Health Department's Health Connections clinic.

Dr. Helms will work full time in the clinic, which provides primary care for low income uninsured adults in Barry and Eaton counties.

The goal of having a full-time physician in the clinic is to be able to provide better care to meet the needs of the many medically complex patients of the clinic, and to allow the clinic to become better integrated with other health care providers in the community.

The clinic is designed to provide primary medical care to adults who do not qualify for Medicaid, but do not have any form of health insurance. Many potential patients are working part-time, or at low wage positions, according to a spokesperson for the Health Department.

Clinic hours in Charlotte are held at the health department, 1033 Health Care Drive, in the county complex, Mondays from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., Thursdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on alternate Wednesdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

In Hastings, clinic hours are Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., Fridays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on alternate Wednesdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Persons wishing to use the services of the clinic should call before the first visit to make sure an opening is available and that they qualify.

The clinic can be reached by calling (800) 533-2565.

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## Woman dies at nursing home; state investigates

Updated: Sep 9, 2007 09:19 AM EDT

By EMILY ZANGARO

**HASTINGS** -- June Dankert was 87 and in relatively good health when she died May 10. For the previous two years, she lived at the Tendercare Nursing Home in Hastings with about 100 other men and women.

Her family said she wrote dozens of letters to loved ones each week to help keep her mind sharp. "Right before they closed the casket," said her son-in-law Gene Trantham, "(another family member) put a pen in June's hand because she was such an avid writer."



June Dankert

After the funeral, an anonymous phone call raised questions.

June's daughter, Kay Trantham, told 24 Hour News 8 a woman from Tendercare called to tell the family how Dankert really died.

"When you go into a coma with no apparent reason, you do wonder," Trantham said. "Apparently, she was given her roommate's hospice medication."

The caller told Trantham there was a delay in getting her mother to the hospital, followed by a cover-up.

Documents obtained by 24 Hour News 8 from the state Department of Community Health divulge more, and confirm dates and stories about "resident number 402" - Dankert's resident number in paperwork provided from the state to Trantham.

The investigation shows multiple citations because Resident 402 was given medication meant for someone else. Resident 402 soon lapsed into a coma and died. Family and emergency room doctors were not notified of the mistake.

Records also show conflicting nurse notes on May 9, from the early morning to the afternoon when Resident 402 was finally taken to the hospital.

In a statement, Paul Stavros, the vice president of marketing and communications with Tendercare, said, "The Attorney General's office is conducting a routine investigation at our Hastings facility and we are fully cooperating."

The state told 24 Hour News 8 the Tendercare facility in Lansing is under scrutiny after a survey found eight citations that put residents in jeopardy. As a result, the federal government will cut Medicare and Medicaid payments at the end of September.

### On the Net:

[Tendercare Nursing Homes](#)

[Michigan Department of Community Health](#)

[Member of the Family](#)



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## Investment in food stamps vital to hungry families

Saturday, September 08, 2007

By Marsha Dehollander

Special To The Press

Right now Congress is debating the future of the Food Stamp Program, the nations first line of defense against hunger. The outcome of that debate means a lot to me, because as Program Director at ACCESS, I help area food pantries obtain the food they need to respond to more than 6,000 families each month. ACCESS is celebrating its 25th year as a link between resources in Kent County and people in need. But our network never was, nor was it ever meant to be, the sole solution to hunger in our county.

Emergency food pantries provide food on a temporary basis, but the pantries depend on donations. Inventory can range from well stocked to nearly depleted -- as is the case currently. Also, a significant number of people either cannot visit the food pantries, because of illness or immobility, or will not, because of embarrassment.

Fortunately, we can also connect families with another support: the Food Stamp Program, the nations single biggest nutrition program for low-income children. In Michigan, the program reaches 1,133,793 residents. Almost half -- 48 percent -- of the benefits go to households with children.

For all these reasons, it is critically important to enhance the Food Stamp Program.

The U.S. House has done its part by passing its version of the 2007 Farm Bill, which reauthorizes the Food Stamp Program and provides \$4 billion in new investments to raise benefits and expand eligibility. The Farm Bill also includes The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), which supports emergency food pantries nationwide.

Now the bill is being considered in the Senate. I certainly hope Michigan Senators Debbie Stabenow and Carl Levin will lead other senators in adopting key provisions in the House bill:

- Stronger benefits: Food stamp benefits average only about \$1 per person per meal. Benefits have eroded in value in recent years because of inflation. Without the changes made in the House bill, benefits for a typical Michigan household of one working parent and two children would buy \$24 per month less than they did in 1995. The House bill restores \$85 million in benefits that low-income households in Michigan would otherwise lose over the next five years.
- More help for the elderly and disabled: For 30 years, the monthly minimum benefit, which goes overwhelmingly to elderly or disabled citizens, has remained at \$10. The House bill raises the minimum to \$16 and indexes it to keep up with increases in food prices. This will provide an extra \$15.9 million over five years to 55,000 recipients in Michigan.
- State Flexibility: The Administration wants to impose one set of eligibility standards on all states, regardless of their specific needs. By preserving the flexibility for states to choose, the House bill will preserve benefits for 26,000 people in Michigan, most in working families, who would otherwise lose all food assistance benefits. The Senate should also strengthen the Food Stamp Program in an area the House bill does not address: childless adults who are unable to find work. Currently, individuals between ages 18 and 49 who do not have children may only receive food stamps for three months out of every three years, unless they work more than 20 hours per week. In Michigan, we have many counties with recurring seasonal unemployment, and others with many unemployed workers chasing fewer jobs. Extending the three-month maximum to six months would help these workers get through difficult times.

It is hard for those who have not known hunger to really understand what is at stake. Let me offer one story

to illustrate. Recently we were conducting outreach to seniors, who have a harder time getting to our food pantries because they are less mobile and have less access to transportation. At a senior center in Lowell, we enrolled a woman for food stamps who never imagined that she was eligible. When she learned she was approved for a benefit of \$80 per month, she said, "That's a wonderful gift, because now I can use that \$80 to pay for my utility bill this winter."

No one should ever have to choose between heat and food. If our senators support the House Farm Bill, they can help make sure that hundreds of thousands of Michigan residents won't be forced to make that choice.

-- Marsha DeHollander is Program Director of All County Churches Emergency Support Network (ACCESS), which works with more than 300 Kent County congregations and coordinates a network of 100 food pantries in the area.

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**DETROIT** -- Each month, cashier Eunique Wilson witnesses the same cycle from her register in the Sav-A-Lot grocery store at Fenkell and Schaefer.

For the first two weeks or so, as the state Department of Human Services disperses that month's food assistance for low-income residents, the rush of customers creates almost too much work for the store's small staff. Toward the end of the month, after most customers have exhausted their food money, there isn't enough business to give the Sav-A-Lot workers full-time hours.

"It's crazy," Wilson said last week as a store full of customers loaded up on staples with their September food benefits. "Everybody runs in here and buys everything they can End of the month? Nothing."

That would change under a Senate bill, introduced earlier this year by Sen. Martha Scott, D-Highland Park, that requires the Department of Human Services to distribute food assistance twice a month instead of once. Recipients now have money loaded onto their state-issued Bridge Cards, which work like debit cards, within the first nine days of each month. The law would make Michigan the first state to distribute food benefits twice a month, department spokeswoman Maureen Sorbet said. The state last year provided \$1.24 billion in federal food assistance to 1.13 million people, a number that has skyrocketed 81.3 percent in the past five years as the state's economy has slumped.

Supporters of Scott's bill, including a consortium of grocers, say twice-a-month distribution of food benefits would not only force recipients to better budget their money, but also encourage them to make wiser food choices, including buying fresh fruits and vegetables.

It also would help grocers, by spreading out the business from food assistance recipients and allowing stores to consistently stock fresh vegetables and meat. As it is now, a number of grocers say they have encountered suppliers who aren't willing to accommodate the fluctuating demand.

"This isn't something meant to restrict or hurt families," said Jane Shallal, president of the Associated Food & Petroleum Dealers, which represents thousands of Michigan grocery and convenience stores. "This would allow grocers to spread out the work and make sure food is fresh all month long. That's healthier for everyone involved."

The bill has few critics, but some welfare rights advocates have said the distribution could create a hardship for some families who have limited transportation to a grocery store. They also say twice-monthly distribution would make it harder for families to buy food in bulk to stretch food budgets.

Food assistance recipients don't have to spend all of their food benefits in one shopping trip at the beginning of the month, but many do -- some because transportation is difficult to find for multiple trips to the store, others because it has become a habit.

Encourages healthier eating

Encouraging better food choices was Scott's motivation for the legislation, which she introduced after visiting grocery stores in her district during the beginning-of-the-month rush.

"A lot of them would be stocking up canned food and ramen noodles," Scott said in a telephone interview. "One woman was buying gallons of milk to freeze for the month because she felt like she had to spend it all at once. I know people do this to stretch their budgets, but distributing the funds twice a month would encourage people to eat healthier with more fresh fruits and vegetables."

That's one reason Laverne Glass started taking her nephew James food shopping twice a month. He used to spend his \$155 monthly assistance all at once because he was so relieved to have received the help after a month without access to much food money.

But when she started caring for him after he came became sick, the shopping trips became more regular.

"They should do it twice a month," James Glass said as his aunt loaded groceries into her car. "You end up buying better food more often instead of just junk, because it'll keep better."

Grocers support the change

Grocers are behind the change, particularly those in Detroit and nearby suburbs who serve many low-income residents on food assistance.

Haitham Sheena owns five Glory Supermarket stores in Detroit, Highland Park and Hamtramck.

"My business drops off 50 or 60 percent toward the end of the month," said Sheena. "It's a problem with stocking the shelves in the beginning of the month and keeping fresh food at the end. It's a problem with having not enough help at the beginning of the month and not enough hours at the end."

Bashar Rabban, co-owner of the Sav-A-Lot on Fenkell and three other stores, worries about his employees dealing with fluctuating hours each month.

"When we're getting over \$17,000 a day in food stamp money at the beginning of the month but less than \$3,000 a day at the end, we can't afford to keep everyone in here full time," Rabban said.

That leaves workers like Wilson, the cashier, struggling to pay first-of-the-month rents with dwindling end-of-the month paychecks.

Cost to state: \$21 million

The cost of making the change is an issue for the Department of Human Services, which opposes the legislation.

It would cost \$21 million to change the software used to load money onto Bridge Cards, notify recipients of the change and increase staffing of phone banks that handle questions and complaints, Sorbet said.

"This comes at time when the state has no extra money," Sorbet said. "It's a frivolous expenditure."

Shallal said the department cost projections are inflated to discourage passage of the bill.

The department has proposed an alternative to Scott's bill, spreading the distribution of the once-a-month benefits over 20 days. Sorbet said that change would take effect sometime next year, likely in late summer or early fall, should the bill requiring twice-monthly aid payments fail.

For its proposal, Human Services requested \$600,000, Shallal noted in a June letter sent to lawmakers encouraging support of the bill.

Sorbet said that proposal is less expensive because it wouldn't require a software change.

Scott said her bill, which has been referred to the Senate Committee on Families and Human Services, has strong backing from many lawmakers in Lansing, including 10 senators who are co-sponsoring the bill.

The same wording appears in House Bill No. 4923, introduced June 14, which also has been referred to a committee.

The Senate bill will go to a vote later this year, Scott said. If passed, it would need approval from the House and the governor.

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## **People try to live on \$3 a day**

Monday, September 10, 2007

By Jake May

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Browsing through the Ann Arbor Arts Fair, Alan Gamble of Jackson saw something that intrigued him: a sign-up sheet for the Food Stamp Challenge.

Gamble agreed to have a food budget equivalent to the average amount a food-stamp recipient receives. Gamble is allowed \$1 per meal, three meals a day, for a seven-day week.

"There's a difference between voluntarily choosing something like this and being stuck in the situation," Gamble said. "Any time that you can do something that can put you closer to people struggling, it's a good thing. Voices that aren't being heard are constantly left out."

The 47-year-old started the challenge Tuesday.

Gamble tried to keep his grocery costs low, purchasing yogurt, malt root beer, mustard greens and assorted vegetables, and oil.

On Thursday -- the third day of the challenge -- he said it was harder than he thought.

"I'm not doing well," he said. "Today I had leftovers for lunch ! sandwich with greening cheese on it and shriveled grapes."

Hunger is a growing issue across the nation and here in Jackson County, where 8,846 households relied on the food-stamp program in July, according to Debra Cole, Department of Human Services Jackson County program manager.

From Sept. 4 through today, Michiganians participated in the Food Stamp Challenge living on just \$3 in food a day.

The Food Stamp Challenge was created to raise awareness about how difficult it is for food-stamp recipients to eat a healthy diet while worrying about other costs such as rent, health care, education, transportation and childcare.

Area nonprofits and churches try to do their part in helping those in need.

Immanuel Lutheran Church, 1505 W. Michigan Ave., opens its doors as a food pantry from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Saturdays.

Church secretary Janet Yager said she sees food come and go, but the hunger remains.

"More food is needed," she said. "I don't think there is enough food available through charitable agencies. I am just getting so many calls for help for food every day."



## Lunch program puzzling

Thursday, September 06, 2007

Back-to-school time in Jackson brings a reminder of my heart problem.

I don't have one. A heart, I mean.

My lack of heart has been diagnosed by co-workers, loved ones, barbers and bartenders.

You may wonder, scientifically speaking, why I am not dead if I have no heart. My theory is all the grease in my arteries keeps blood flowing through sheer lack of friction.

My heartless condition flared this week on exposure to headlines announcing the price of school lunches is rising.

"Why should they pay anything for lunch?" I wondered. "Any kid can eat free all summer."

It's true.

Free lunches were served to some 1,300 kids at 21 sites around Jackson over the summer. Some sites served breakfast, too.

Taxpayers covered the cost through a branch of the federal government's school lunch program. If 1,300 kids eat in Jackson, millions must eat across the nation.

Here's what happens every time I discuss this subject.

Me: "Why does the school lunch program feed kids when school is not in session?"

Anyone who hears me: "Kids need to eat in the summer, too."

Me: "Their parents should feed them."

Anyone who hears me: "Do you want poor children to starve? You are a heartless tub of lard."

It does no good to point out programs like WIC and food stamps mean poor families should have food in America. Several people I know were raised or raised children with help from food stamps and government beans.

Assuming poor people will not feed their children is a slander. Lack of money does not make them child neglecters.

"Have you ever tried to live on food stamps?" people ask. "You are a heartless pile of dog waste."

It also does no good to point out any kid, not just ones from poor families, can eat free lunches. There is no income requirement so yours, mine and the Rockefeller children are eligible.

Maybe rich people do not send their children out for free lunch. But they can. That is no pressing need for spending limited tax dollars.

"Do you want to humiliate kids by making them prove they are poor before they can eat? You are a

heartless bucket of swill."

School is back in session now so free and reduced-price lunches go only to kids from families the government decides cannot afford to pay. The cost for everyone else is about \$2 a day.

Congratulations if it makes sense to you why all kids can eat free when school is out but not when school is open.

You must have a heart. What's it like?

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## Leaders push for tax credit

Saturday, September 08, 2007

By Kristin Longley

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The Rev. Lee Hampton knows his congregation -- dedicated Jackson County residents who work hard to provide for their families.

He also knows many of them can benefit from a planned state earned income tax credit, which starting next year would give back hundreds of dollars annually to low-wage workers. The extra cash would come in handy for those who are struggling to pay bills, gas their cars and buy school supplies, he said.

That's why Hampton on Friday joined state Sen. Mark Schauer and other community leaders in criticizing a move to delay the tax credit due to the state budget shortfall.

"We can't balance the budget on the backs of the working poor," said Schauer, D-Battle Creek. "These are people who are working, playing by the rules and living on the margins."

The state earned income tax credit was overwhelmingly approved last year with bipartisan support, Schauer said.

A single mother raising two children and making minimum wage would receive a \$478 tax credit in the first year.

But Republican Sen. Nancy Cassis, R-Novi, recently introduced legislation that would keep the earned income tax credit from going into effect until the state's finances are in better shape. She says Michigan cannot afford to lose the nearly \$300 million in tax revenue when the credit is fully phased in.

Under the proposed legislation, the credit would only be implemented if the state has \$250 million dollars in its rainy day fund, which is nearly depleted.

Schauer said the bill has a "nearly zero chance" of passing the Democrat-controlled state House. "But any time legislation is introduced, we need to take it seriously," he said.

Sen. Randy Richardville, R-Monroe, who represents a portion of Jackson County, said he is leaning against the legislation. If the tax credit needs to be cut, he would rather see it decreased rather than delayed altogether, he said.

"Our most vulnerable citizens in tough economic times are the ones we need to look after," he said. "I'll have to take a real hard look at this."

Low-income workers already are eligible for the federal earned income tax credit, which gives back up to \$4,700 annually.

Eligible Jackson County residents this tax season received \$693,636 under the federal return, according to Community Action Agency CEO Marsha Kruecher. That's more than what Hillsdale and Lenawee counties received combined.

"It absolutely surprises me how much money was taken out of very low-income workers' paychecks for taxes," Kruecher said. "These families are so grateful when they get this help."



Hampton, of Jackson's Church of God, said those extra dollars are being spent locally.

"(Low-income workers) rarely leave the community -- they don't have the resources," he said. "This (tax credit) would definitely help our entire community."

-- The Associated Press contributed to this story.

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Article published Sep 9, 2007

## The Salvation Army: 'The need is unbelievable'

By Stacy Jenkins  
STAFF WRITER

Once upon a time, Marium donated all she could to the Salvation Army. Now, she finds herself knocking on their door for help.

The Southfield woman, who preferred to be identified by first name only, was one of several people in line this week at the Salvation Army offices at Inkster and Shiawassee in Farmington Hills, hoping for assistance.

She stood in line at 6 a.m. on Tuesday, but missed the cutoff, so she stayed for the afternoon round of assistance. The first five people in line are helped, if they qualify. Like many other people, Marium needed help paying a utility bill.

"We fell behind when my mom had a heart attack," she said. "Now, we'll be out on the streets in two months."

Marium lives with her mother and three brothers. She remembers a time when she was able to help others and now she's praying for the same for herself and her family.

"I used to help people all the time, when I was young, when I had money," she said. "God says kindness done from the heart will never go unanswered."

Farmington Hills resident Roberta Berry, who is eight months pregnant, sat on the pavement outside of the Salvation Army offices, hoping for help.

Her gas was shut off after falling behind on payments. She said her ex-husband stopped paying child support when he lost his job. She has five children, ages 18, 16, 13, 11 and 2.

The stories behind the faces of everyone in line outside of the Salvation Army offices have a common theme of desperation.

"All you have to do is look around at the job situation here in Michigan, it's just horrible," said Capt. Chris DiMaso, of the Salvation Army.

A recent round of funding, \$13,000, from the Consumers Energy People Care Fund made it possible for DiMaso to distribute help, up to \$400 toward rent or up to \$300 toward utilities, to people who qualified.

The money went fast.

One man got in line for the 8:30 a.m. round at midnight.

"He came in here with his bill, we paid it and his lights were turned back on," said DiMaso. "We're trying to help people to stay in their houses and keep their lights on."

A man came in Tuesday for assistance who has a doctorate degree, but is out of work, said DiMaso.

"I think there are a lot of people who are holding out hope and they're not taking that \$9 per hour job," said DiMaso. "We're seeing more and more of that. The term 'working poor' is not just a catch phrase, it's a reality.

"It's horribly embarrassing for them to come here; you can see it in their faces. But, that's why we're here."

The Salvation Army is able to distribute assistance when it receives funding from Consumers Energy, the Red Kettle campaign at the holidays and from the Michigan Public Services Commission. Monetary donations are always appreciated, said DiMaso.

Those interested in donating money to the Salvation Army may drop by the office, located on the northwest corner of Inkster and Shiawassee, during business hours of 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. The office is closed for lunch between noon and 1 p.m.

To receive assistance, the client must meet federal poverty guidelines.

"If you don't fit them, we can't help you," said DiMaso.

Income and the number of people per household are two main factors. Michigan identity cards or driver's licenses are required, among other documentation.

DiMaso suggests people seek help right away, instead of waiting until they receive shut-off notices from the utility companies.

"People think of us as a last resort, but the more time we have, the better we can help them," he said.

The Farmington Hills office serves about 300 people per month, in various capacities, who live in southwest Oakland County. The service area is from Southfield to South Lyon.

"The need is unbelievable," he said. "This is a really hard time for everybody. There is no funding push until the holidays. Without this People Care funding, there's not much we can do to help."

For more information, call the Salvation Army at (248) 477-1153.

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